There is only one project i.e. Yelahanka DGPP Extension by M/s. Karnataka Electricity Board having capacity of 2x23.4=46.8 MW which is under examination in Central Electricity Authority.

Increase in Price of Petrol

1903. SHRIMATI JAYAWANTI NAVINCHANDRA MEHTA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the comparative figures of petrol prices both national and international market for the last three years as on date and the reasons for it being higher in the national market;

(b) whether the off-shore drilling has gone down drastically during the last three years;

(c) if so, the details thereof, Statewise; and

(d) the corrective measures being taken in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU) : (a) Information is being collected and shall be placed on the Table of the House.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The details of metreage and wells drilled during the last three years in offshore are as under:-

1993-94	359702	162
1994-95	204116	89
1995-96	163086	79

(d) The quantum of drilling activity depends on implementation of approved field development projects, new prospect generation by basin analysis and evaluation process, results of exploratory and delineation drilling and availability of exploration acreages.

Amendment to Urban Land Act

1904. SHRI MOHAN RAWALE :
SHRI RAM NAIK :
SHRI SUSHIL CHANDRA :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government propose to bring about amendments to the Urban Land Act, 1976;

(b) if so, the salient features of the proposed amendments; and

(c) by when these amendments are likely to be put before Parliament ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (DR. U. VENKATESWARLU) : (a) and (b) Government of India is considering proposals to amend the Urban Land (Ceiling & Regulation) Act, 1976 in order to make it more workable and effective. The State Governments have been requested to give their suggestions regarding amendments to the Act. A Committee has also been set up for making recommendations to amend the Act.

(c) It would be difficult to give a definite time frame because as per the Constitutional requirement, after the approval by the Government, the Legislatures of at least two States where the Urban Land (Ceiling & Regulation) Act, 1976 is applicable have to concur and pass resolution under Article 252(2) of the Constitution to enable the introduction of the Bill in the Parliament.

Industry Status to Housing Sector

1905. SHRI V. PRADEEP DEV : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether there have been persistent demands for according the status of Industry to the Housing Construction Sector; and

(b) if so, the action Government propose to take in the matter ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (DR. U. VENKATESWARLU) : (a) and (b) The demand for declaring housing as an industry has been raised in the past in the context of requirement of increased institutional funding for the housing sector. It was noted that only service sector part of housing was not getting institutional funding support, as the manufacture of building materials was already within the purview of industry.

With the establishment of National Housing Bank and a chain of housing finance institutions in different parts of the country, the requirement of institutional funding for the housing sector has been significently met. Moreover, refinance from industrial finance institutions, namely, IDBI and ICICI, is also now available for housing projects costing more than Rs. 5 crores on a case-to-case basis without housing being declared an industry.

In the light of the above, the institutional flow of funds to the housing sector has gradually increased and the demand for declaring housing as an industry has abated.

Local Purchase

1906. SHRI JANG BAHADUR SINGH PATEL : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have issued instructions of its offices located in Delhi and outside to make local purchase of stationery and other articles from Kendriya Bhandar, Super Bazar and National Consumer Cooperative Federation;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons for issuing such orders;

(c) the number of cases of irregularities in the purchase from the said institutions that have come to light in the last five years;

(d) the action taken thereon;

(e) whether it has been stipulated in the order issued in 1981 that a Committee consisting of a representative from each of Department of Supply, Urban Development and Kendriya Bhandar will fix the price of articles and the same shall be circulated to all the departments in the Government; and

(f) if so, whether any such committee has been constituted to fix the prices and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI S.R. BALASUBRAMONIYAN) : (a) and (b) Government have issued instructions that Central Government offices and other organisations financed and/or controlled by the Government located in Delhi/New Delhi may make all local purchase of stationery and other items required by them either from Kendriya Bhandar or Super Bazar or National Co-operative Consumers' Federation of India (NCCF) or Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC) (for file covers only) and, offices located outside Delhi shall make such local purchases from local Central/Wholesale consumer cooperative societies and branches of Kendriya Bhandar/NCCF located therein. Only if they are not able to supply a particular item, such purchases should be made from other sources as per rules after obtaining no objection certificate from them. Consumer cooperatives are considered suitable agencies for supply of goods at fair and reasonable prices. Kendriya Bhandar, Super Bazar and NCCF are Government sponsored cooperative institutions and the above instructions have been issued in pursuance of the above policy.

(c) and (d) While no case of irregularity as such in the purchases made by Kendriya Bhandar and NCCF has been reported, customers' complaints and suggestions including defects in any particular lot, are attended to promptly and remedial action taken by the above institutions. Super Bazar has also been taking remedial action on various complaints/irregularities; however, in one case regarding supply of inferior quality steel trunks to Chief Electoral Officer, Government of Delhi, the Super Bazar has referred the matter to the C.B.I.

(e) and (f) The matter is under examination.

Unemployment

1907. SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE : Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have identified the rural areas in the backward States that there is unemployment and under employed; and

(b) whether the Government propose to implement any special programme for creation of employment opportunities for the unemployed people in these backward States ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI CHANDRADEO PRASAD VARMA) : (a) and (b) The major programmes for the creation of employment opportunities for the unemployed people in rural areas are Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) and Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), which are being implemented in all the States including in the backward States where there is unemployment and underemployment. Under JRY & IRDP more funds are allocated to the States which have larger number or rural poor i.e. on the basis of proportion of rural poor in the States to the total rural poor in the country. EAS moreover, is a demand driven scheme and States can come for subsequent instalments of funds as and when the district has utilised 50% or more of the available funds. The allocation/release principle under JRY, IRDP & EAS ensures that more funds are given to backward States.

[Translation]

Herbs

1908. SHRI R.L.P. VERMA : Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether there are forest hills in lacs of acres of land in the Vananchal region of South Bihar;

(b) if so, whether any research has been conducted regarding availability of herbs in area;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor and efforts made by the "Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants" for meeting the increasing demand of herbs in Global Market and earning foreign exchanges;

(d) whether the Government propose to set up a